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"FORTUNES WASHED AWAY"

No. 167

"RAY LUTHER'S PLUCK"

July 5, 1941

ORGAN THEME: DEEP RIVER

CAST IN UNISON

We took it for granted that land was everlasting;

We said ownership of the land insured security.

VOICE

Tools would wear out, men would die --

CAST IN UNISON

But the land would remain.

ORGAN: HORROR CHORD

ANNOUNCER (cold)

Fortunes Washed Away!

ORGAN: DEEP RIVER

ANNOUNCER

By the shore of Gitchie-Goomie, by the laughing big sea water, is  
a land of plains and stream-cut plateaus and erosion-worn mountains,  
a land of charming lakes and streams and disconsolate cut-over  
forests -- but still a land of trees, with conifers in the north  
and hardwoods in the south. This is Wisconsin, the Dairy State,  
the Badger State, where the waters of Minnetonka invite the year  
around, where the Algonquin tribes and the Dakotas and the Sioux  
divided their happy hunting grounds. And in the land of laughing  
water, on a narrow plain between towering bluffs lies Sparta, in  
Monroe County -- the scene of the 167th consecutive episode of  
"Fortunes Washed Away".

ANNOUNCER

Six years ago, it was October, Hallowe'en time, a time for frolic -- but there was no gayety in the log cabin of Ray Luther, south of Cataract, Wisconsin. Ray Luther had a loyal wife, four children, and a will to live -- but you see...(FADE)...

WIFE

Feeling better, dear?

LUTHER

Don't worry about me. I'll soon be up and around. (COUGHS).

WIFE

Oh, Ray.

LUTHER

I said -- don't worry about me.

WIFE

No, dear.

LUTHER

Just talk to me.

WIFE

Of course....

LUTHER

Hey...did you hear about that man from LaCrosse that made a cleanup around here forty or fifty years ago?

WIFE

Cutting the timber, I suppose.



LUTHER

No, but -- well, I guess a lot of folks did clean up that way. But what did they do to the land -- look around us and see for yourself. The soil washing, creeks running red...

WIFE

Don't talk too much, dear.

LUTHER

I'm feeling better. About that man from LaCrosse -- well, he bought some land not far from here -- around 1865, so they tell me. By night he planted some barrels of crude oil and put in some pipes and valves and stuff...

WIFE

What for?

LUTHER

I'm coming to that. One morning oil began to flow. Everybody flocked to the spot, and the owner kindly permitted his friends to buy stock in his oil company.

WIFE

And I suppose oil always flowed when prospective buyers were investigating.

LUTHER

It never failed -- until one day when the gentleman from LaCrosse had gone -- with \$50,000. He made the most of his chance -- and I can too, if I get a chance.

WIFE

Now, just a minute, Fay -- you're not getting any ideas...

LUTHER (DESPAIRINGLY)

Oh, it's no use, it's no use.

WIFE

What's no use, dear?

LUTHER

I just keep thinking of owning our own farm -- or even renting one. I don't want relief -- I want a chance to show I can amount to something, once I'm well. I want a chance.

ORGAN: BRIEF BRIDGE

ANNOUNCER

I want a chance. Brave words, those -- and Ray Luther was a brave man. As his health improved, so did his drive toward a new life -- the life of a farmer. One day, as he sat in his arm chair by the side of his wife, a stranger came up to the cabin. Mrs. Luther was busy with her needlework, when....(FADE).

LUTHER

Who's that coming up the walk?

WIFE

I'll see. You just sit right there.

LUTHER

Oh, bother with this sitting around! I'm able to work.

WIFE

Never mind. (TO VISITOR). Good morning.

HANCHETT

Good morning. Is this Mrs. Luther?

WIFE

Yes.

HANCHETT

I'm W. H. Hanchett, from the Farm Security Administration.

WIFE

Oh. Won't you come in?

SOUND: Screen door opens...

HANCHETT

Thank you.

SOUND: Screen door closes...

WIFE

Ray, it's Mr. Hanchett from the Farm Security folks.

LUTHER

Oh, yes. You got my letter?

WIFE

Sit down, Mr. Hanchett.

HANCHETT

Thank you. Yes, we got your request for a loan, and that's what I'm here to talk to you about. You've had a pretty tough time lately, haven't you?

LUTHER

It hasn't been too easy. Last winter I walked four miles morning and night to work for a farmer -- got fifty-seven cents a day for it. Then I got sick and I'm just now beginning to come out of it.

HANCHETT

You've helped out, haven't you, Mrs. Luther?



LUTHER

Helped out? She's done all of the work lately.

WIFE

I'm not afraid of work. Yes, I've made rag dolls and mittens and caps for Christmas, and done whatever I could with my needle -- but of course that didn't bring in all we need.

LUTHER

Yes, and she's helped farmers' wives at housecleaning time and threshing and silo-filling time, too.

HANCHETT

Now, let's see -- your application says you want to rent a farm.

LUTHER

I've got my eye on the Starkey farm....

HANCHETT (whistling)

I know that farm. Six miles north of Sparta. It's pretty run down, Mr. Luther. Gullies all over it.

LUTHER

It's not so far gone that a good man can't build it up. I've got a few ideas of my own about soil fertility. Now, I figure that I can plow in the gullies, lime and fertilize 'em and seed 'em down -- put the land in permanent grass, and raise livestock. The man that has been on that farm before just hasn't treated it right. You treat the land right and it'll treat you right.

HANCHETT

Yes, I agree with you. Mr. Starkey told me himself that the land won't support fifteen head of livestock, just because it's been allowed to run down. I know he's looking for a good tenant.



LUTHER

I want that chance, Mr. Hanchett.

HANCHETT

Mr. Luther, we have to be careful about these loans. They were made available for responsible farmers, and we have to look into the facts mighty close.

WIFE

We've nothing to hide.

HANCHETT

I know you haven't. I've made inquiry of your neighbors, and they tell me that Mr. Luther is an honest man, temperate in his habits.

LUTHER

All I want is a chance.

HANCHETT

And I noticed when I came up that the wood pile was all worked up ready for use, neatly piled...the tools were put away, and everything seems to be in order.

LUTHER

We do the best we can.

WIFE

Mr. Hanchett, would you give us a chance? We'll make good. We never have had a chance and if we get one, we'll make good. That's all we want -- a chance.

HANCHETT

Mrs. Luther, I think you'll get your chance.

ORGAN: MONTAGE THRU FOLLOWING.

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LUTHER

There it is...our loan is approved!

ORGAN: UP

WIFE

A farm of our own!

ORGAN: UP

ANNOUNCER

Build up the land!

ORGAN: UP

HANCHETT

Take care of the land!

ORGAN: UP

ANNOUNCER

Defend the soil!

ORGAN: UP

HANCHETT

You have your chance!

ORGAN: UP

WIFE

A farm of our own!

ORGAN: UP AND OUT.

ANNOUNCER

A farm of our own -- and the Ray Luthers were a happy family when they moved their few worldly goods to a worn-out, run-down, eroded farm that few people else would have. Six years rolled by, six happy years, six years of toil and tears and sweat -- six years that brought results....

SOUND: Horse whinnying.....

LUTHER

What do you think of him, Mrs. Luther?

WIFE

He looks like a good buy, Ray -- but I'll declare, I don't know where you're going to put all this livestock you're getting lately.

LUTHER

Right out there in that pasture, and let them feed on that rye.

WIFE

Rye, and clover -- where there were nothing but gullies six years ago.

LUTHER (MOCK ARROGANCE)

No gullies now, my dear -- thanks to careful farm management.

WIFE

Oh, Ray -- you have done a wonderful job on this farm.

LUTHER (SERIOUSLY)

Any farmer can do the same, if he has his heart in the work. I like farming. We were given a chance to have a farm of our own, and I'm not going to muff it. Now you see, a long rotation, using legumes, has increased the humus in the soil. Every time I harvest a crop, I sow the field down right away, to keep a cover on the ground.



WIFE

You haven't said anything about my canning. For your information, Mr. Luther, last year I canned nearly 500 quarts of fruits and vegetables --- from our own garden and orchard.

ORGAN: Sneak in SYMBOLIC MUSIC

LUTHER

I am proud of you, of course. It's a happy day for me when I can go to Sparta, now. Once I used to be ashamed -- because I felt that folks were looking at me and saying to themselves, there goes a failure. But now I know that we're part of the life of this community, just as the land is part of our life. America has been good to us --- and we must be good to it. We can do our part by defending the soil. We have our chance.

ORGAN: UP AND OUT.

ANNOUNCER

That is the true story of Ray Luther, conservation farmer of Monroe County, Wisconsin -- a man who turned an eroded, much-scorned farm into one of the most respected in the community. And now, for other news in the conservation world, here are a few items furnished by the Soil Conservation Service of the United States Department of Agriculture. (ANNOUNCER CONTINUES)



ANNOUNCEMENT (CONT'D.)

First, here's an announcement about a meeting. Many of you probably have heard about the organization formed last year, the "Friends of the Land." The "Friends of the Land" is a national conservation society, and it will hold its summer meeting at Columbus, Ohio, beginning July 18. Members from more than 30 states are expected to attend. From Ohio will be such men as Louis Bromfield, the author; Paul B. Sears, of Oberlin College; H. C. Ramsower, Director of the Ohio Agricultural Extension Service; and Commissioner of Agriculture John T. Brown.

And now here's a word from Walter Gumbel, West Virginia's extension soil conservationist. Someone asked E. C. Roush, chairman of the board of supervisors of the Mason County Soil Conservation District, just what the farmers in the district considered as their objectives. Here was Mr. Roush's reply: "We must first, through education and demonstration, impress upon farmers and the public in general the importance of conserving our soil, water, forests, and wildlife resources. And then, we plan to cooperate with farmers in developing and installing complete conservation programs on their farms." Other objectives of the Mason County District are to use the land for which it is best adapted -- cropland, pasture, or woodland -- and protect those areas from soil erosion through the use of contour strip cropping, diversion terraces, contour furrows, and other practices. (ANNOUNCER CONTINUES)

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D.)

The District will reforest land not suited for cultivation or pasture and protect such areas, along with growing stands of timber, from fire and grazing. It will develop a wildlife program by cooperating with farmers interested in providing food and cover. It will encourage farmers to cut timber on a sustained-yield basis, it will develop an adequate farm drainage program, and it will consider stream clearance projects where needed. In other words, Mr. Roush and his fellow farmers in Mason County, West Virginia, have their work cut out for them.

We hear from Michigan State College that Michigan farmers are going in for more trees. The college nurseries produced four million trees last year, the number will be even greater in 1941, and next year the output is expected to be nearly seven million. These trees are used by farmers principally for forest and shelter-belt plantings.

From the north we swing south to the land where they grow kudzu for erosion control purposes. Kudzu, you know, is that spreading vine that has become highly popular for controlling erosion and for hay production. The U. S. Department of Agriculture warns against mowing kudzu at the wrong season of the year. If kudzu is mowed in June or July, the second cutting should be made in the late fall, about the normal date of the first frost. If kudzu is mowed in July, and then again in August, the stand may be injured seriously. (ANNOUNCER CONTINUES)



ANNOUNCER (CONT'D.)

Well, that's the news from the conservation world -- and now, the "Eleventh Commandment."

ORGAN: Sneak in DEEP RIVER.

ANNOUNCER

"Thou shalt inherit the holy earth as a faithful steward, conserving its resources and productivity from generation to generation. Thou shalt safeguard thy fields from soil erosion, thy living waters from drying up, thy forests from desolation, and protect thy hills from overgrazing by thy herds, so that thy descendants may have abundance forever. If any shall fail in this stewardship of the land thy fruitful fields shall become sterile stony ground and wasting gullies, and thy descendants shall decrease and live in poverty or be destroyed from off the face of the earth."

ORGAN: UP AND OUT.

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